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**REMEMBERING THE REAL DRAGON**

An Interview with George Jackson

*"IT SHOULD NEVER BE EASY FOR THEM TO DESTROY US. IF YOU START WITH MALCOLM X AND COUNT ALL OF THE BROTHERS WHO HAVE DIED OR BEEN CAPTURED SINCE, YOU WILL FIND THAT NOT EVEN ONE OF THEM WAS REALLY PREPARED FOR A FIGHT.... BUT EACH ONE THAT DIED PROFESSED TO KNOW THE NATURE OF OUR ENEMIES. [THE] ILLINOIS STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL SENT 15 PIGS TO RAID THE PANTHER HEAD-QUARTERS AND MURDER [FRED] HAMPTON AND [MARK] CLARK. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THOSE 15 PIGS IF THEY HAD RUN INTO AS MANY VIET CONG AS THERE WERE PANTHERS IN THAT BUILDING. THE VC ARE ALL LITTLE PEOPLE WITH LESS GENERAL EDUCATION THAN WE HAVE. THE ARGUMENT THAT THEY HAVE BEEN*

*DOING IT LONGER HAS NO VALIDITY AT ALL, BECAUSE THEY WERE DOING IT JUST AS WELL WHEN THEY STARTED.... IT'S VERY CONTRADICTIONARY FOR A MAN TO TEACH ABOUT THE MURDER IN CORPORATE CAPITALISM, TO ISOLATE AND EXPOSE THE MURDERERS BEHIND IT, TO INSTRUCT THAT THESE MADMEN ARE COMPLETELY WITHOUT STOPS, ARE*

*LICENTIOUS, TOTALLY DEPRAVED - AND THEN NOT MAKE ADEQUATE PREPARATIONS TO DEFEND HIMSELF FROM THE MADMAN'S ATTACK. EITHER THEY DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THEIR OWN SPIEL OR THEY HARBOR SOME SORT OF SUBCONSCIOUS DEATH WISH." G.J. 1970*

Conducted by Karen Wald in San Quentin Prison, May 16 and  
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purposes. I'd like to say that the only way we're ever going to have change is to have the real power necessary to bring the changes we want into being. I'd like to say that the establishment is never going to be persuaded into giving us real power, it's never going to be tricked into, it's never going to feel guilty and change its ways. The only way we're ever going to get the power we need to change things is by taking it, over the open, brutal, physical opposition of the establishment. I'd like to say we must use, as Malcolm X put it, *any means necessary* to take power. I'd like to say that we really have no alternatives in the matter, and that it's ridiculous or worse to think that we do. That's what I'd like to say.

**Karen Wald:** George, could you comment on your conception of revolution?

**George Jackson:** The principal contradiction between the oppressor and oppressed can be reduced to the fact that the only way the oppressor can maintain his position is by fostering, nurturing, building contempt for the oppressed. That thing gets out of hand after a while. It leads to excesses that we see and the excesses are growing within the totalitarian state here. The excesses breed resistance; resistance is growing. The thing grows in a spiral. It can only end one way. The excesses lead to resistance, resistance leads to brutality, the brutality leads to more resistance, and finally the question will be resolved with either the uneconomic destruction of the oppressed, or the end of oppression. These are the workings of revolution. It grows in spirals, confrontations, and I mean on all levels. The institutions of society have buttressed the establishment, so I mean all levels have to be assaulted.

**Wald:** How does the prison liberation movement fit into this? Is its importance over-exaggerated or contrived?

**Jackson:** We don't have to contrive any...Look, the particular thing I'm involved in right now, the prison movement was started by Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party. Huey and the rest of the comrades around the country. We're working with Ericka [Huggins] and Bobby [Seale, chairman of the BPP; at the time they were co-defendants in a murder trial in New Haven, Connecticut, on charges which were subsequently dismissed], the prison movement in general, the movement to prove to the establishment that the concentration camp technique won't work on us. We don't have to contrive any importance to our

particular movement. It's a very real, very very real issue and I'm of the opinion that, right along with the student movement, right along with the old familiar workers' movement, the prison movement is central to the process of revolution as a whole.

**Wald:** Many of the cadres of the revolutionary forces on the outside have been captured and imprisoned. Are you saying that even though they're in prison, these cadres can still function in a meaningful way for the revolution?

**Jackson:** Well, we're all familiar with the function of the prison as an institution serving the needs of the totalitarian state. We've got to destroy that function; the function has to be no longer viable, in the end. It's one of the strongest institutions supporting the totalitarian state. We have to destroy its effectiveness, and that's what the prison movement is all about. What I'm saying is that they put us in these concentration camps here the same as they put people in tiger cages or "strategic hamlets" in Vietnam. The idea is to isolate, eliminate, liquidate the dynamic sections of the overall movement, the protagonists of the movement. What we've got to do is prove this won't work. We've got to organize our resistance once we're inside, give them no peace, turn the prison into just another front of the struggle, tear it down from the inside. Understand?

**Wald:** But can such a battle be won?

**Jackson:** A good deal of this has to do with our ability to communicate to the people on the street. The nature of the function of the prison within the police state has to be continuously explained, elucidated to the people on the street

investigate it much further. The idea was that if they don't like it, it must be good. You see? And that's what led me to seriously study socialism. I owe much of my own consciousness to the Cuban revolution. But that's *me*. It doesn't necessarily pertain to Jonathan. Okay?

**Wald:** Did the fact that such a tiny country so close to Florida pulled off a successful revolution give you a sense that, "If they can do it, we can do it"?

**Jackson:** Yes, both then and now. It caused me to consider the myth of invincibility. You know, the idea of u.s. military invincibility was just completely destroyed by the Cuban revolution. The u.s. supported Batista with rockets and planes, everything he needed, and he still lost. He was destroyed by guerrilla warfare, the same thing that's taking place in Vietnam right now. And the u.s. is losing again. The Viet Cong, I mean they take these gadgets—the best things the best military minds in the western world can produce—they take them and they ball them up and throw them right back in the face of these imperialist fools. Cuba and now Vietnam; these things catch my attention. I try to learn the lessons from other peoples' successes. Now, in that sense I'm sure the Cuban revolution had significance for Jonathan, too.

**Wald:** I see our time is almost up. Do you have any last remarks you'd like to make?

**Jackson:** Yes, I'd like to say POWER TO THE PEOPLE! And I'd like to say that by that I mean all power, not just the token sort of power the establishment is prepared to give us for its own



**Wald:** I was going to ask if the Cuban revolutionaries had a significance for you and Jonathan in any concrete ways.

**Jackson:** Hmmmm...I don't think it did for Jonathan. But it did for me, because I was in prison. I was just starting my time on this beat right here when Castro, Che, and the rest carried the revolution there to a successful conclusion. And the alarm that spread throughout the nation, especially, you know, within the establishment and the police...well, let's just say that as a newly-made prisoner I enjoyed that a lot. Someone else's liberation at the establishment's expense, it was a vicarious boost at a time when I most needed it. And I've always felt very tenderly toward the Cuban revolution as a result.

**Wald:** Then you weren't an anti-communist when you came into prison?

**Jackson:** Oh, I've never been an anti-communist. I suppose you could say I didn't have much understanding of communism when I came in, and so I wasn't pro-communist in any meaningful way. But I was never "anti."

**Wald:** But didn't you initially find it terrible that Cuba had "gone communist"?

**Jackson:** *No-no-no!* That's what I'm trying to tell you. I'm trying to get across that I've always been fundamentally anti-authoritarian. Communism came later. And when the Cuban revolution happened, the very fact that it upset the authorities here so bad made me favor it right off and made me want to

because we can't fight alone in here. Oh yeah, we can fight, but if we're isolated, if the state is successful in accomplishing that, the results are usually not constructive in terms of proving our point. We fight and we die, but that's not the point, although it may be admirable from some sort of purely moral point of view. The point is, however, in the face of what we confront, to fight and *win*. That's the real objective: not just to make statements, no matter how noble, but to destroy the system that oppresses us. By any means available to us. And to do this, we must be connected, in contact and communication with those in the struggle on the outside. We must be mutually supporting because we're all in this together. It's one struggle at base.

**Wald:** Is the form of struggle you're talking about here different from those with which we may be more familiar with, those which are occurring in the Third World, for example?

**Jackson:** Not really. Of course, all struggles are different, depending upon the whole range of particular factors involved. But many of them have fundamental commonalities which are more important than the differences. We *are* talking about a guerrilla war in this country. The guerrilla, the new type of warrior who's developed out of conflicts in the Third-World countries, doesn't fight for glory necessarily. The guerrilla fights to *win*. The guerrilla fights the same kind of fight we do, what's sometimes called a "poor man's war." It's not a form of war fought with high tech weaponry, or state-of-the-art gadgets. It's fought with whatever can be had—captured weapons when they can be had, but often antiquated firearms, homemade ordnance, knives, bows and arrows, even slingshots—but mostly through the sheer *will* of the guerrilla to fight and win, no matter what. Huey [P. Newton] says "the power of the people will overcome the power of the man's technology," and we've seen this proven

true time after time in recent history.

You know, guerrilla war is not simply a matter of tactics and technique. It's not just questions of hit-and-run or terrorism. It's a matter of proving to the established order that it simply can't sustain itself, that there is no possible way for them to win by utilizing the means of force available to them. We have to prove that wars are won by human beings, and not by mechanical devices. We've got to show that in the end they can't resist us. And we will! We're going to do it! There's never going to ever be a moment's peace for anyone associated with the establishment any place where I'm at, or where any of my comrades are at. But we're going to need coordination, we're going to need help. And right now, that help should come in the form of education. It's critical to teach the people out there how important it is to destroy the function of the prison within the society. That, and to show them in concrete terms that the war is on—right now!—and that in that sense we really aren't any different than the Vietnamese, or the Cubans, or the Algerians, or any of the other revolutionary peoples of the world.

**Wald:** In an interview with some imprisoned *Tupamaros*, urban guerrillas in Uruguay, the question was raised about the decimation of the ranks of *Tupamaros*; comrades killed or imprisoned by the state. Those interviewed assured me that there were far more people joining the ranks than were being lost to state repression, and that the movement was continuing to grow. Do you feel the same confidence about the Black Panther Party, about the revolutionary movement as a whole in this country?

**Jackson:** We're structured in such a way as to allow us to exist and continue to resist despite the losses we've absorbed. It was set up that way. We know the enemy operates under the concept

these "gains" away whenever it's convenient. You can mark my words on this: unless a real revolution is attained, all that's been gained during the struggles of the past decade will be lost during the next ten years. It might not even take that long.

At the present time, I see a number of very hopeful signs—very positive indications—that a true revolutionary force is emerging. Most notably, of course, the direction taken by the Black Panther Party is correct. But there are many other examples I could name. Even in the white community, we have seen the development, or at least the beginnings of the development, of what is necessary with the establishment of the Weatherman organization. We clearly have a long way to go, but it's happening, and that's what's important at the moment. The very fact that Tom Hayden, who is of course a white radical himself, was willing to make the statement he made, and before the audience to which he made it, indicates the truth of this. So, yes, I tend to agree with him and hope we are both correct. Clear enough?

**Wald:** Yes. Do you see a relationship between what happened at the Marin County Civic Center, between what Jonathan and the other brothers did, and the kinds of things that happen in the Third World, say, in Latin Amerika?

**Jackson:** Well, of course. Jonathan was a student...he was a military-minded brother. He was a student of Che Guevara and Ho, and Giap and Mao, and many others. *Tupamaros*, Carlos Marighella. He paid close attention to other established guerrillas, other established revolutionary societies, revolutionary cultures around the world. He was very conscious of what was going on in South Amerika and, well, let's just say that about ninety-nine percent of our conversation was centered on military things. I knew him well. He understood.

people in the streets at any one time to express their opposition to the imperialist war in Indochina [this seems to be a reference to the November 1969 Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam, staged in Washington, D.C.]. The covert dimension of the movement is, by comparison, very much retarded at the present time. In part, this may be due to the very nature of the activity at issue: guerrillas always begin in terms of very small numbers of people. But, more to the point, I think the situation is due to there having been a strong resistance to the whole idea of armed struggle on the part of much of the movement's supposed leadership—particularly the white leadership—up to this point. I hear them arguing—contrary to history, logic, just plain common sense, and everything else—that armed struggle is unnecessary, even “counterproductive.” I hear them arguing in the most stupidly misleading fashion imaginable that the overt dimension of the movement can bring on revolution on its own. This is the sheerest nonsense, and “leaders” who engage in such a babble should be discarded without hesitation.

We may advance a simple rule: the likelihood of significant social change in the united states may be gauged by the extent to which the covert, armed, guerrilla aspect of the struggle is developed and consolidated. If the counter-revolutionaries and fools who parade themselves as leaders while resisting the development of the movement's armed capacity are overcome—and the struggle is therefore able to proceed in a proper direction—I think we will see a revolutionary change in this country rather shortly. If, on the other hand, this leadership is able to successfully do what amounts to the work of the state—that is to say, to convince most people to shy away from armed struggle, and to isolate those who do undertake to act as guerrillas from the mass of support which should rightly be theirs—then the revolution will be forestalled. We will have a situation here much the same as that in Chile, where the establishment allows a certain quantity of apparent social gains to be achieved, but stands ready to strip

of “kill the head and the body will die.” They target those they see as key leaders. We know this, and we've set up safeguards to prevent the strategy from working against us. I know I could be killed tomorrow, but the struggle would continue, there would be 200 or 300 people to take my place. As Fred Hampton put it, “You can kill the revolutionary, but you can't kill the revolution.” Hampton, as you know, was head of the Party in Chicago, and was murdered in his sleep by the police in Chicago, along with Mark Clark, the Party leader from Peoria, Illinois. Their loss is tremendous, but the struggle goes on. Right?

It's not just a military thing. It's also an educational thing. The two go hand-in-hand. And it's also a cyclical thing. Right now, we are in a peak cycle. There's tremendous energy out there, directed against the state. It's not all focused, but it's there, and it's building. Maybe this will be sufficient to accomplish what we must accomplish over the fairly short run. We'll see, and we can certainly hope that this is the case. But perhaps not. We must be prepared to wage a long struggle. If this is the case then we'll probably see a different cycle, one in which the revolutionary energy of the people seems to have dispersed, run out of steam. But—and this is important—such cycles are deceptive. Things appear to be at low ebb, but actually what's happening is a period of regroupment, a period in which we step back and learn from the mistakes made during the preceding cycle. We educate ourselves from our experience, and we educate those around us. And all the while, we develop and perfect our core organization. Then the next time a peak cycle comes around, we are far readier than we were the last time. It's a combination of military and education, always. Ultimately, we will win. You see?

**Wald:** Do you see signs of progress on the inside, in prison?



**Jackson:** Yes, I do. Progress has certainly been made in terms of raising the consciousness of at least some sectors of the prison population. In part, that's due to the limited victories we've achieved over the past few years. They're token victories perhaps, but things we can and must take advantage of. For example, we've struggled hard around the idea of being able to communicate directly with people on the outside. At this point, any person on the street can correspond with any individual inside prison. My suggestion is, now that we have the channels for education secured, at least temporarily, is that people on the outside should begin to bombard the prisons with newspapers, books, journals, clippings, anything of educational value, to help politicize the comrades who are not yet relating. And we, of course, must reciprocate by consistently sending out information concerning what's really going on in here. Incidentally, interviews like this go a long way in that direction. There should be much more of this sort of thing.

**Wald:** You disclosed a few months ago that you had been for some time a member of the Black Panther Party. Certainly, the work of the Party in this state and elsewhere, the work to free political prisoners, and of course the Party's work within the Black community have been factors which influenced your decision. But has the internationalism of the Black Panther Party been one of the key aspects which attracted you to it? And, if this is so, is internationalism meaningful for people in prison, and is it therefore one reason why they'd relate to the Party?

**Jackson:** Well, let's take it a step at a time. Huey came to the joint about a year ago because he'd heard stories about the little thing we had going on already. He talked with us, and checked it out, and he decided to absorb us. Afterwards, he sent me a message and told me that. He just told me that I was part of the Party

of him, even though he was my younger brother.

**Wald:** The news today said that Tom Hayden declared in front of the National Student Association Congress that there will be more actions like the one Jonathan attempted. Do you agree?

**Jackson:** I've been thinking a lot about the situation. I'm not saying that these particular tactics—even when successfully executed—constitute the only valid revolutionary form at this time. Obviously, they don't. There must also be mass organizing activities, including large-scale non-violent demonstrations, education of the least developed social sectors, and so on. These things are essential. The revolution must proceed at *all* levels. But this is *precisely* what makes the tactics necessary, and far too many self-proclaimed revolutionaries have missed the point on this score. Such tactics as Jonathan employed represent a whole level—an entire *dimension*—of struggle which has almost always been missing from the so-called amerikan scene. And while it is true that armed struggle in-and-of-itself can never achieve revolution, neither can the various other forms of activity. The covert, armed, guerrilla dimension of the movement fits hand-in-glove with the overt dimension; the two dimensions can and must be seen as inseparable aspects of the same phenomenon; neither dimension can succeed without the other.

Viewing things objectively, we can readily determine that the overt dimension of the movement is relatively well-developed at this time. Over the past dozen years, we've seen the creation of a vast mass movement in opposition to the establishment in this country. I won't go into this in any depth because I'm sure that everyone already knows what I'm talking about. It should be enough to observe that within the past two years, the movement has repeatedly shown itself able to put as many as a million



wasted.

**Jackson:** Well, that's obviously a tough question for me because, emotionally, I very much wish my little brother was alive and well. But as to whether I think Jonathan's life may have been wasted? No, I don't. I think the only mistake he made was thinking that all of the 200 pigs who were there would have, you know, some sort of concern for the life of the judge. Of course, they chose to kill the judge, and to risk killing the DA and the jurors, in order to get at Jonathan and the others. It may have been a technical error. But I doubt it, because I know Jonathan was very conversant with military ideas, and I'm sure it occurred to him that there was a possibility that at least one pig would shoot, and that if one shot, they'd all shoot, and it'd be a massacre. Judge or no judge. It was all a gigantic bluff, you know? Jonathan took a calculated risk. Some people say that makes him a fool. *I* say his was the sort of courage that cause men of his age to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in somewhat different settings. The difference is that Jonathan understood very clearly who his real enemy was; the guy who gets the congressional medal usually doesn't. Now who's the fool?

Personally, I bear his loss very badly. It's a great burden upon my soul. But I think it's imperative—we owe it to him—never to forget why he did what he did. And that was to stand as a symbol in front of the people—in front of *me*—and say in effect that we have both the capacity and the obligation to stand up, regardless of the consequences. He was saying that if we all stand up, our collective power will destroy the forces that oppose us. Jonathan lived by these principles, he was true to them, he died by them. This is the most honorable thing imaginable. He achieved a certain deserved immortality insofar as he truly had the courage to die on his feet rather than live one moment on his knees. He stood as an example, a beacon to all of us, and I am in awe

now, and that our little group was part of the Party as well. And he told me that my present job is to build, or help build, the prison movement. Just like that. Like I said, the objective of our movement is to prove the state can't seal us off in a concentration camp, so I accepted. What else could I do? It was the correct thing.

Now, as to your second point, the people inside the joint, the convict class, have related to the ideology of the Party 100 percent. And we've moved from...well, not we, I've always been an internationalist. And a materialist. I guess I was a materialist before I was born. I'm presently studying Swahili so that I will be able to converse with the comrades in Afrika on their own terms, without having to rely on a colonial language. And I've been working on Spanish, which is of course a colonial language, but which is spoken by millions upon millions of comrades in Latin Amerika and elsewhere. I plan to study Chinese after that, and possibly Arabic. When I complete this task, I will be able to speak to something like seventy-five percent of the world's people in their own tongue or something akin to their own tongue. I think that's important.

The other brothers here are picking up on it. And there are some, especially those who are already politicized before they came inside, who are on top of it. But like I said, it's of utmost importance that people outside bombard this place with material which will help prisoners understand the importance of internationalism to their struggle. It's coming, but it's still got a way to go before the educational process is complete. Ignorance is a terrible thing and being cut off from the flow of the movement is really detrimental. We must correct the situation as a first priority.

**Wald:** Can you receive mail and publications from other

countries?

**Jackson:** Mail can be received from anywhere on the globe. I get stuff right now from Germany and England and France as a result of the book being published in these countries. And a few copies of *Tricontinental* [a Cuban revolutionary journal] have gotten in. They've helped broaden the scope, and explained a few things to comrades that they didn't understand. This is something that really upsets the goons. In years past, every time a Black prisoner would achieve an intellectual breakthrough and begin to relate our situation to the situation of the Cubans, say, or the Vietnamese or the Chinese—or anywhere else in the Third World—well these prisoners would be quickly assassinated. Now that's become a little harder to do. So, I believe the people on the street should just start to flood the prisons with things like *Tricontinental*.

**Wald:** Despite a few peaceful victories in Latin Amerika, such as that of Salvador Allende in Chile, many people still believe that armed struggle is the only way most Latin Amerikan countries are going to be free. Also, there've been some recent victories in the courts for members of the Black Panther Party, *Los Siete de la Raza* [seven Chicano activists from San Francisco charged with murder in 1969; they were acquitted], and so on. Do you believe the victories in Chile and in the courts...

**Jackson:** They were appeasement. Allende...the thing that happened with Allende...look, it was *not* a “peaceful revolution.” That's deception. Allende is a good man, but what's going on in Chile is just a reflection of the national aspirations of the ruling class. You will never find a peaceful revolution. Nobody surrenders their power without resistance. And until the upper

class in Chile is crushed, Allende could at any time be defeated. No revolution can be consolidated under the conditions that prevail in Chile. Blood will flow down there. Either Allende will shed it in liquidating the ruling class, or the ruling class will shed his whenever it decides the time is right. Either way, there's no peaceful revolution.

Much the same can be said for the court cases you're talking about. They're an illusion. Every once in a while the establishment cuts loose of a case—usually one which was so outrageous to begin with that they couldn't possibly win it without exposing their whole system of injustice anyway—and then they trot around babbling about “proof that the system works,” how just and fair it is. They never mention the fact that the people who were supposed to have received the justice of the system have often already spent months and months in lockup, and have been forced to spend thousands and thousands of dollars, keeping themselves from spending years and years in prison, *before* being found innocent. All this to defend themselves against charges for which there was no basis to begin with, and the state knew there was no *basis*. Some system. You get your punishment before your trial in this country if you happen to be Black or Brown or political. But they use these things to say the system works—which I guess it does, from their perspective—and to build their credibility for the cases that really count, when they really want to railroad someone into a prison cell. The solution isn't to learn how to play the system for occasional “victories” of this order, although I'll admit these sometimes have a tactical advantage. Winning comes only in destroying the system itself. We should never be confused on this point.

**Wald:** But the alternatives sometimes bear dire consequences. This raises the difficult question of the death of your brother, Jonathan, and whether his life may to a certain extent have been